

## What is the Concern?

Every year, the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) conducts inspections of construction sites. The purpose is to assess the actual or potential effect of these sites on adjacent water, including ground water. These inspections also assess whether the permittee is implementing the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan required for each construction site.

## Why is it Important to Prevent Stormwater Runoff?

Potential for erosion exists wherever land clearing activities take place. The soils, weather, and geography of the Puget Sound area can be very challenging for construction activities. The primary water pollutants associated with construction sites are sedimentation and turbidity resulting from erosion. These pollutants clog streams and take away options for beneficial human and aquatic uses. This pollution must be prevented when working soil.

The importance of preventive maintenance cannot be over-emphasized. Even when a stormwater pond has been prepared, if it is overwhelmed with turbid water at the beginning of the wet weather season, the chances are good that it will stay that way throughout the winter and spring. Clean water coming into a turbid pond will create more turbid water, forcing a permittee to play "catch up" to prevent pollution discharges.



## The Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, or SWPPP

The main component or “cornerstone” of the stormwater permit for construction activities is the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).

An important component of the SWPPP is the inclusion of an Erosion & Sediment Control Plan. This plan includes a description of best management practices (BMPs) that will be used to identify, reduce, eliminate, or prevent, sediment and erosion problems at the construction site.

The SWPPP is a changeable document that should be modified to reflect physical improvements at the construction site. Ecology encourages permit holders to continually adapt their SWPPPs in order to prevent turbid water discharges to state waters.

## Common Problems Observed on Construction Sites

- ❖ Not having a SWPPP
- ❖ Not carrying out the SWPPP
- ❖ Exposed soil throughout the site
- ❖ Stockpiled materials uncovered
- ❖ Improper silt fence installation, placement, and maintenance

- ❖ Sediment ponds/traps not functional before activities occur that disturb land
- ❖ Tracking mud out on to public access roads
- ❖ Not preventing “run-on” from entering the construction site
- ❖ No cover/containment of petroleum fuel containers
- ❖ No knowledge of permit requirements

This is not an exhaustive list; specific requirements depend upon your site.

## Laws and Permit Conditions Related to Construction Sites

The Revised Code of Washington (RCW), Washington Administrative Code (WAC), and the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit conditions listed below, are evaluated by Ecology to ensure compliance with the construction permit at your facility. You should be familiar with these terms.

- ❖ **RCW 90.48.080** Discharge of polluting matter in waters (*is*) prohibited. Pollutants are defined as: dirt, oil, grease, concrete slurry, etc.
- ❖ **WAC 173-201A-030** (1) (vi) Turbidity shall not exceed 5 NTU\* over background turbidity when the background turbidity is 50 NTU or less, or have more than a 10 percent increase in turbidity when the background turbidity is more than 50 NTU. Turbidity is the legal measurement of dirty water in Washington. (*\*NTU is a standard to measure the clarity of water, literally: Nephelometric Turbidity Unit*)

You'll find these conditions required in the permit issued by Ecology:

- ❖ **Permit Condition S9.C1** The Erosion and Sediment Control Plan, a major component of the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), must be in place to minimize erosion and the transport of sediments.
- ❖ **Permit Condition S9.B.3** The permit holder must retain the SWPPP on-site or within reasonable access to the site and make it available upon request to Ecology.
- ❖ **Permit Condition S9.C.1a (i)** All exposed and unworked soils must be stabilized by suitable and timely application of BMPs.
- ❖ **Permit Condition S9.C.1a (vi)** Wherever construction vehicle access routes intersect paved roads, provisions must be made to minimize the transport of sediment (mud) onto the paved road.

## What Can the Permit Holder do Before the Wet Weather Season?

Take a preventive approach before an Ecology inspector arrives on-site. Ecology requires you to compare your current SWPPP to actual conditions of the site before the wet weather season begins. According to Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington, the wet weather season occurs from **October 1 to April 30**. It is crucial that proper erosion & sediment

control BMPs are put in place before storm events start!

## Let's Get Past the Dirty Water

Preventive maintenance is the solution! Using berms, pipes, conveyance channels, or other structural BMPs, clean water should be routed around areas of exposed soil and settling ponds. Give yourself a break and don't treat more water than you have to. ***Remember, clean water into a turbid pond = more turbid water!***

## Contacts and Information for Ecology Inspectors by County

- ◆ **Clallam, Jefferson, Mason, Thurston** - contact **Betsy Dickes** at 360-407-6283.
- ◆ **Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum** - contact **Rusty Post** at 360-690-4787.
- ◆ **Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific** - contact **Janet Boyd** at 360-407-0245.
- ◆ **Island, San Juan, Skagit** - contact **Robert Wright** at 425-649-7060.
- ◆ **King** - contact **Bob Penhale** at 425-649-7074.
- ◆ **Kitsap, Snohomish** - contact **Bob Penhale** at 425-649-7074.
- ◆ **Pierce** - contact **Margaret Hill** at 360-407-0246.
- ◆ **Whatcom** - contact **Andrew Craig** at 360-676-2217.

*If you have special accommodation needs or require this document in an alternate format, please call us at 360 407-6404. The TTY number is 711 or 1-800-833-6388*

# Preparing for Wet Weather Season Construction in Western Washington



## Permit Holder's Guide

